



The College Spy® Podcast with Michelle McAnaney

Episode 7

The Transition to College: An Interview with Dale Troy of Crush College Stress

Welcome to The College Spy podcast, a podcast for parents and students addressing all aspects of the college selection and admissions process. I'm Michelle McAnaney, the founder of The College Spy. We offer college planning services to students and families across the United States and internationally. We are a team of dedicated educators who are committed to helping students and families identify the right colleges to apply to and get accepted. We offer our guidance and expertise in a way that improves student performance, increases confidence and promotes college readiness and maturity. The College Spy works with all students including students interested in the STEM fields, students with learning differences, international students, and third culture kids. To learn more about The College spy, visit our website at thecollegespy.com and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

Welcome to episode seven of The College Spy podcast. This episode includes my interview with Dale Troy, founder of Crush College Stress, The College Spy's Tip of the Day, and a college spotlight on DePauw University. Dale Troy has been helping students successfully transition to college for over 10 years. She works with recent high school graduates and college freshmen on developing the skills they need to thrive as college students. She empowers students by teaching them to implement habits that will reduce their daily stress and maximize their productivity. Students that work with Dale are more likely to achieve their academic goals, make smart decisions and feel confident in their ability to manage the independence that comes with the transition to college. Dale received her BA in Political Science from Yale University and her law degree from Yale Law School. She is certified as a health coach by the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. Throughout her broad and varied career, Dale has worked as an attorney, a legal recruiter, a professional health coach and an entrepreneur. These roles have solidified Dale's expertise in time management, organization communication and healthy habits. As a college success coach, Dale serves as a teacher, motivator, accountability partner, and counselor for the students she works with as she guides them through their journey to college success.

Michelle McAnaney:

Dale, welcome to The College Spy Podcast. I'm so glad that you're here.

Dale Troy:

So am I. Thanks for having me.

Michelle McAnaney:



Yeah, absolutely. So let's get started with having you share with our listeners what a college success coach actually is. I think that's something that people aren't going to know about and then it's a new term for them. So tell us what it is.

Dale Troy:

Yes, it is a new term. And there aren't that many of us, but I think it's really needed. So essentially, who I am, or what I do is I help students prepare to do well in college, or if they're already in college, I help them get back on track so they can be successful. So the whole focus is what you need in order to be successful as a college student in a on a college campus without your parents there.

Michelle McAnaney:

Right. How did you get into the field?

Dale Troy:

Well, it was a little bit of a road. But I started as a lawyer, I went to Yale College and Yale Law School, as did my three daughters. And I learned quickly that I like working with people. So I transitioned out of legal practice and became a headhunter for lawyers. I was coaching lawyers in getting new jobs. So I really love that one on one support that I was giving them. that that just was natural for me. And then as I had more kids, I decided I needed to be home. So 10 years later, I became a health coach. And I learned a lot about what it takes to do well in terms of how you're taking care of yourself and how that affects your mind, your body and just your overall performance. So I incorporated a lot of that into my life and into my kids' lives. And the transition point to being a college success coach really came when I saw my kids in college on campuses, and everyone was stressed out, including my daughters. And because of my health coach background, and I think because my kids were at Yale, a lot of friends started asking me if I could help their kids who are stressed out on actually the one that comes to mind is a Boston College child. And I loved it because I could just give them some new skills, some new habits and new ways of handling their life. And quickly, they would see changes and everything would turn around. And it just occurred to me at that point that what I was doing doesn't really exist on a college campus. And why not use all of my background and, and figure out how I could make a difference and help the kids who are so stressed out for reasons that could be relatively easily fixed, if they had the right skills and habits that they didn't know.

Michelle McAnaney:

So I hear you saying that the students who are who you're coaching are experiencing stress, but what else are they struggling with?

Dale Troy:



Well, they are experienced stress, but it really the root cause is, oftentimes that is the academic piece that they don't, they don't know how to manage their time. They didn't haven't created a good structure for themselves. They get behind in their classes. They're afraid to ask for help because it might look like they're stupid. They are having problems with their roommate I mean, all these other things that are going on. But all they're thinking about is "Oh, I'm so stressed, I can't do this. I'm overwhelmed. I don't know what to do." And what I really work on are those root causes. So when you change those, then the stress lessens.

Michelle McAnaney:

Are you finding that the students that you're working with did well in high school, and that these challenges they're experiencing when they get to college are a surprise for the families? Or were there signs that this was gonna. What I'm thinking is, did the work just get harder? Are they distracted by the social? Or are they struggling, and they were always struggling?

Dale Troy:

Well, there probably are two groups, but the ones that I generally work with, the kids were fine in high school. High school wasn't very hard. And the expectations on in college, particularly the academic expectations are so different. And the lack of structure and the lack of accountability, or anybody really paying attention to them. Those two things, I think, kind of combined to make them not be able to be as good a student as they were in high school. And I think parents just don't realize that how big of a difference it is. And they just assume, well, my child was fine in high school, why wouldn't they be fine in college? But it doesn't always translate.

Michelle McAnaney:

I see that often in my practice because I'm working with the students helping them get into college and choosing which colleges they might want to apply to, and where would be a good fit for them. And there's a big focus on the student's part, and also the parent's part on getting accepted and getting accepted is the goal without thinking so much about what do I need to do to prepare in order to do well, once I am actually there. Just because you are accepted doesn't mean that you're going to find the transition easy. What do you think parents can do now to help prepare their students for the transition to college and the changes that they're going to encounter?

Dale Troy:

Well, I think the overall idea is that you want to give your your child more responsibility. You want to pull back your involvement with them so that they you know, they know that they're responsible for waking up in the morning for getting their assignments in, for completing projects without you, for making sure they have everything that they need when they go to school. I think our generation has been just a little bit too involved in their lives and haven't let them fail if they're going to fail and make you know, make some small mistakes, and let them



realize that they can handle it. They're so they're so reliant on parents that all of a sudden when they're on campus, and they don't have anybody else paying attention to what's going on, they can just become so overwhelmed and they can't do it.

Michelle McAnaney:

I see this a lot with my students where things will happen, where I'm trying to schedule an appointment with the student and the parent will jump in and do that scheduling. And the students are so interesting because they'll allow their parent to do it. They're used to that and they're comfortable with it. And I think some of them feel, "why not?" It's easier. Where making an appointment with your college counselor is such an easy thing that students can do, they have the ability to do that, and so I want parents to let them do it and to really be involved in helping their students solve problems where when the student can't do it by themselves, but what I'm seeing often is parents jumping in and being involved when the child is completely capable. And I will often turn to colleagues are my husband and say, "what is that about?" Do you know, working with parents and students? What is that about what is driving that parent to solve the problem.

Dale Troy

I kind of think that parents are just very wrapped up in having their kids do well. And they're going to do whatever it takes to get them there. They're going to scaffold them. They're going to get the tutors, get whatever resources they need, and make sure their child gets to one of those good name colleges. So that, you know, they're, they're not realizing in the long term, that is not a good idea. Because then their child isn't feeling capable in themselves. And that's when they go to college. Some of that is going to going to be obvious.

Michelle McAnaney:

Right. Yeah, I see what you're describing, which is great intentions. I never have a parent. And not all my clients are like this. But some are, but I never have a parent who's trying to help with bad intentions. They always have fantastic intentions. And, and sometimes what I'm seeing is anxiety on the parent's part. Also which trickles down to the students once and sometimes, sometimes not. So, it's interesting, that they're not thinking long term that if they make all the phone calls for their child, for example, to get their hair cut, to go to the doctor, to change a schedule with their school counselor, that when the child gets to college, making a phone call is going to be hard. They're not going to know what to say, or how to leave a message so that they can get their needs met.

Dale Troy:

No, absolutely. Yeah. And another area is it's so important in college to be able to go talk to a professor and advocate for yourself, if something you need help with. So many students will not do that. Because partly because as you said, they haven't had that experience that maybe their,



their mom has picked up the phone and said, "Oh, I need to have an appointment with you, because my child's not doing well in your class." Now, that is shouldn't you know, that shouldn't be. The child should have to address the teacher in high school and work it out themselves because that's what they're going to have to do when they go to college.

Michelle McAnaney:

It is. And I think some parents don't necessarily realize that, that colleges don't communicate with parents. I run all these Facebook groups. And I see this in there sometimes where a parent will say my child is having a problem in college, and I want to go to the campus or I want to be part of that meeting. And other parents will say you should, you need to be, you got to get there your child needs you. And I'm often shaking my head and saying that is just not going to fly at school. They're going to be surprised, or they're just not going to include you in that meeting.

Dale Troy:

Yeah. It's definitely hands off. When you when you get to college. I mean, they are 18, or they're treated like adults. And I mean, there are some waivers that you can do in order to get information about what's going on. But generally speaking, yes, your child's responsible for taking care of themselves. And, you know, I just thought of another thing that happens so often, in terms of the academic part is that kids are used to getting extensions and doing extra credit to raise their grade. So they just assume that, oh, I'll just go to the teacher and say, "Can I do something extra to get my D up to a C", but the teachers the professor's gonna say no, you know, you had your chance, you didn't do well on the exams, and you know, you have a D for this semester. It's not the same as high school.

Michelle McAnaney:

No. And that's often a shock for the student, right? I used to teach Intro to psychology and developmental psychology at the community college level when I was a school counselor in Maine. And I would have high school students in my course for dual enrollment, and one of them... so cute...let me know that she would not be coming to class and I said, "Okay, thank you for letting me know." And then she didn't do the assignment. And later on when that affected her grade, she said to me, "Mrs. McAnaney, I thought it was an excused absence." And of course, she knew me from high school because I was her school counselor in high school. But in this role, I was her college professor or college instructor. And I said, "there's no excused absence in college." And she was shocked. And I'm really glad that she learned that as a high school student in dual enrollment courses with me where we could work it out, as opposed to in college where they're just gonna say, "No." Kids are not prepared for that change. I don't think anybody educates them on that and that's likely your role if you can get them early enough.



Dale Troy:

Yeah, absolutely. My program. We've talked a lot about academics, but my program really covers four different pillars, which are like all areas that I think can be worked on ahead of time. And I actually love working with students that summer before they go to college because then they are prepared and then they know these things and they don't make mistakes that were unnecessary. So as we talked about the academics, but I also talk, help them a lot with the social part, and making sure they understand how important it is from day one, to be open to making friends, to join activities, to really feel part of the campus. I can't tell you how many students later on, we'll all find out that they feel like they have no friends, and never joined anything because they thought they didn't have time. So you know, if you do it from day one, if you feel like, you know that that's a really big part of feeling good about what's going on in your life on campus, that, then you'll do it. And there's lots of keys about living with a roommate that probably students don't know because they never have lived with a roommate. And so I talk about that. And then the third pillar is all the self care, all the things that they're doing on a daily basis that make a big difference in how they feel, physically and emotionally. And can they focus in class and has to do a lot around getting enough sleep. That's probably the biggest issue. And most students in high school really aren't thinking about that. You know, they just kind of have like a routine, they have to go to sleep at certain hours and get up at a certain hour every single day. And they haven't really thought about what am I doing and how much sleep do I really need. But they, they need to figure that out, and other physical things as well like exercise and eating healthy. The fourth pillar is the emotional part, which is again, something that students aren't thinking about when they're at home, know, their parents are their kind of emotional support system. But in college, they, they are not going to have that. Hopefully, they will have friends and other people that they can talk to if they need to. And they can use campus resources, but they should know themselves, like how to deal with stress, what are they going to do? Are they going to do deep breathing? Are they going to go walk in nature? Are they going to use a gratitude journal? What is it going to make them feel less stressed and feel like they can control that those emotions that they're having. And, one thing that I do talk to them a lot about is how they're talking to themselves, that they're talking to themselves in a positive way that's going to go a long way toward really making them feel good and making them feel like they can. They can do what they need to do. But if they're if they're negative, and they feel like they're just failing, is just going to that's going to that's what's going to happen.

Michelle McAnaney:

Sure. Yeah, it sounds like a really great program. How long is it? How long do you work with students?

Dale Troy:

The program is seven weeks. And we work with it's on Zoom. It's very practical. Everything I do is like very practical. I actually have a workbook that goes along with it so that they'll remember



what we did. And we'll practice a lot of these things in between sessions. For instance, if we're talking about sleep, I will have them chart how much sleep they're getting, and see if they can notice what difference it might make if they get more sleep or less sleep, and also how long it's taking them to fall asleep. Because if they're having that issue, there are other things that we can do to help with that.

Michelle McAnaney:

What is the student's reaction to working with you? I know students and I have a feeling it's very positive because... tell me if this is right...that a lot of times they don't have an experience where somebody talks to them about these things. And it might be the first time where the focus is really on them and their well being, not just getting good grades or not just being involved in activities or but overall, how are they feeling? And how are they doing? So what is their response?

Dale Troy:

You know, I'm often surprised that the tools to reduce stress is really helpful. And they they're they really kind of eye opening for them that Oh, wow, there's actually some things that I can do. They just thought that stress, I just have to deal with stress. And that's just how life is. So yes, I mean, they don't they really haven't given that a thought. It's something I guess that most parents aren't talking about, and it's not talking about in school. So my experience has been super positive. I mean, just to give you an example, I'm thinking of two people that I worked with before they went to college, and one was going to Colgate, one was going to Vanderbilt. I mean, so these are bright kids and their parents understood the the benefit of being proactive. I've spoken to the mom of the boy who went to Vanderbilt and he's doing he's has like almost all A's the first semester. And she said I don't think this would have happened if he hadn't worked with you. Because he was so nervous. He didn't know what to expect. He you know, he's the oldest in the in his family. And he was just really petrified about going to college and didn't, you know, didn't know how it was going to be different than what he needed to know. And just having this as a background, before he stepped on campus really helped him feel much calmer and was able to, you know really do well. And he's involved in all sorts of activities. I mean, it's just going, it's going great. So I love hearing that.

Michelle McAnaney:

Give us an example of one of the stress reducing techniques that you use with students, maybe our parent and student listeners can benefit from it.

Dale Troy:

Probably the simplest and most useful is deep breathing. So the idea is to let your body know that you're okay. When you start to feel stressed, you might notice that your heart rate's getting faster, you might be sweating, you might feel a little nauseous, I mean, all those things



are happening. And if you just kind of calm yourself down, by staying, maybe sitting, in one place, and doing deep breathing, for even a couple minutes, all of a sudden, your body's realizes that there's no threat. Everything's fine, and all those symptoms will disappear. So that's really what I love teaching because they get it so quickly. And they you know, we actually practice we'll shut our eyes and I'll count five and inhale of five with your, through your nose, and we'll hold our breath for two, a count of two, and then we'll blow out through our mouth to the count of seven. That's how I teach it because I needs to be something that they'll remember, well, so it's five plus two is seven.

Michelle McAnaney:

Perfect. With the four something with, when I've tried it that way, I'm like, "this is too long." So as soon as I can only, I only have to hold it for two? Dale's got this. And the times I've tried deep breathing, I think it takes less than a few minutes to calm down, I think four or five breaths sometimes. And you can move away from worrying about the symptoms of stress into problem solving, whatever you need to take care of, that's causing you to feel that stress and anxiety.

Dale Troy:

Right. And also when you're stressed you can't use your frontal lobe. I mean, it's not, you can't activate that. So once you calm down, you can.

Michelle McAnaney:

Right. And the frontal lobe, that's the part of the brain that develops last in adolescence, right, so they're still developing their prefrontal cortex. And some kids struggle to use all of those great skills that adults will have because their brain is not fully developed anyway. And then when the stress takes over, it could cause for quite a difficult time in college, I can imagine.

Dale Troy:

Yeah, and I, you know, I, unfortunately, you see kids doing other things like, Oh, well, I'll just go party and drink some beer, and I'll feel fine. And clearly, that's not the best solution. But they don't know what is the solution, they don't, they don't realize. I mean, even simple exercise can be a solution. Go for a run, go, go work out, go to an exercise class, that, you know, it will take your mind off of whatever that stress was. And it will also create endorphins to make you feel better.

Michelle McAnaney:

And they can do that with other people, which is one of the things they need to do when they get to campus is make new friends and not rely on texting old friends all the time from high school. One of the things that I hear from students, and you touched upon it before, when they're trying to make that final decision of which college to go to, it's down to two. And I'll say what do you need to know about your college experience in order to pick this college or this



college? What's the information you're lacking? Let's go research it. Right. And they say to me, I want to know, either I'm going to get along with my roommate, or I'm going to have friends. And that's what they can't know. And it's stressful. And they're worried about loneliness. And I think that's a big problem on campus. I get a lot of phone calls this time of year of students. It's January, they're home from break, and they don't want to go back. And so the call is coming to me. My child's considering transferring. Can you help? And yes, I can help. But I think Dale you can help to because if they weren't experiencing loneliness or the stress around doing well in school, they might not want to transfer. It might be that there's another problem besides this college isn't the right fit.

Dale Troy:

Exactly. Yeah. I mean, and they're going to be the same person on their first campus or their second. So they really need to look at what are they doing, or what could they be doing differently that would make it make them feel like they want to stay.

Michelle McAnaney:

Absolutely. And then that's what you said about getting the kids to get involved right away. I just had a chat with a student who is a sophomore at Villanova. And so I got to talk to him about "how's it going?" He's home from break, and we did a zoom. And, he said last year he didn't really get involved in that many things he kind of was looking around and seeing, like, what could he possibly get involved in and just taking note of it. And I think he had friends from being living on campus, I don't think he was experiencing a lot of loneliness. But he's saying this year, I'm getting much more involved, and some of that personality not wanting to put your whole foot in the water, just your toe. But with a little bit of encouragement, students like that might have a much better freshman experience, because they can get involved earlier. You don't have to wait.

Dale Troy:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, and I always tell students, that freshman year is the perfect time to get involved, and to make friends because everybody wants to do that. So it's not like you're the one, the one person that is trying to get involved. I mean, everybody is trying out different clubs. It's just so normal. And in same way as talking to someone who you don't know in your class, because nobody knows anybody. So it just, it should take that pressure off of feeling like there's something wrong with me, or I'm doing something wrong. You're doing you're doing the right thing.

Michelle McAnaney:

Right. One of the things I've heard you talk about before is the role of the college parent or the parent of a college student, that the role changes. I wonder if you can share a little bit about that with our listeners.



Dale Troy:

Well, it kind of piggybacks on what we talked about before, which is that in high school, they should start pulling back. So they should continue that in college. I mean, they should, clearly you want to communicate with your child. And I do recommend that you have a regular day of communication or a time that you've set, so that everybody knows, they're going to kind of check in and see how you're doing, how the child's doing. But beyond that, I mean, parents do a variety of things. I mean, I've heard parents in my group talk about texting their child every single day, and then multiple times a day, I mean, to me, that's just not the way to go because you want your child to start to feel more independent and not rely on you. And if you keep checking in, they're gonna feel like, a lot of things. The child is going to feel like, well, I guess my parent doesn't think I'm capable, or, you know, they're worried about me every second. So maybe I should be worried there's something scary here. So you know, if you back off and just be more responsive to your child, I think that's better. And in addition, say your child texts you and says there's something problem. Oftentimes, that problem gets resolved, if you don't answer right away. You know, it could be some crisis. But, you know, half an hour later, they don't even remember why they texted you and said it was crisis. So give it a little bit of time. And then if the say you feel like you do need to talk to your child, let them tell you what's going on. Don't ask a lot of questions, be in the listening mode. And if something needs to be done, if there is a real problem, ask your child "well, what do you think, you know, what do you think you should do? What are your options?" Get them to start problem solving on their own, so that you're always the solution You want them to be an adult.

Michelle McAnaney:

Right. And I also think that when the student comes up with the solution on their own, they're more likely to do it, as opposed to the parent giving advice, the student might just automatically say, "No, I don't want to," as opposed to when they it's their idea and then you say, "that's a great idea. Tell me what happens. Let me know how it worked out." They know you care. But they also know that they can do this. They have the resources that they need within themselves to solve their own problems and be successful.

Dale Troy:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. What just went through my mind is, you know, I would I kind of look at college as a great opportunity before they go off into the working world. So use that as an opportunity to let them really be responsible, take some risks, make decisions on their own, because it's in a safe context. So if they haven't done any of that, before they go off in the working world, it's going to be so much harder for them.

Michelle McAnaney:



Sure. Let's end this podcast episode, this interview, by just giving a nod to the fact that this is really hard for parents. It's so hard to let go, not solve the problem, change the way your parenting or you have been parenting all along. And I think that parents often go through feelings of loneliness when their children are away at school and that change of role is uncomfortable. Do you have advice that you give to parents when you're working with their students?

Dale Troy:

Yeah, that's a good question. Well, number one, they should join my Facebook group because we have every all the parents in there are experiencing the same thing really?

Michelle McAnaney:

Tell everybody about your Facebook.

Dale Troy:

It's called College Parent Support Community. And we talk about everything related to college. Before they're in college, when they're in college, and those kinds of issues do come up. But I would say in general, I think it's a good idea to make sure you have some other interests or develop some new interests. Because you know, your role as the parent was, you know, so much a part of who you were, when they were in high school, and you just have to realize that this is a new chapter. And you really need to focus more on yourself and let your child move along and grow and develop on their own as well. So I would just maybe think about some of the things you would like to do for yourself, a new hobby, join, join some clubs yourself, learn something new. There's all these online courses. There's so many things that you can do that maybe you hadn't really thought about. But it's an opportunity for you to really focus more on yourself.

Michelle McAnaney:

I will put a link to your Facebook group in the show notes so that parents can find it easily and join. It's a great group. I'm a member of it, and I know from the responses when I read the comments that other parents are putting in there, that they find it really valuable. So I encourage everybody to sign up. How can people get in touch with you if they wanna learn more about your services or schedule a call? Tell, give us some information and I'll drop that in the show notes.

Dale Troy:

Sure, the very easy way to schedule a call with me. No obligation, no pressure. Just if you wanna have a chat about whatever's going on with your child is talkwithdale.com and that will go to my calendar. And then beyond that, if you wanna learn more about what I do, my website is crushcollegestress.com.



Michelle McAnaney:

That's great. Thank you so much for your time, Dale. Really appreciate it.

Dale Troy:

Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Each year, The College Spy offers a course called College Admissions 101 for parents. The course is live, it's interactive and it's online. In the course, you'll gain the knowledge and confidence to guide your student through the college admissions process. We meet four times over Zoom, and we will examine these topics closely. How to build a college list that best fits your child. How to research colleges to fully understand what they have to offer, how to choose between the SAT, the ACT, or whether to go test optional the college application timeline, college application strategies for success and an overview of financial aid. Each session is 75 minutes long. I pack a lot of information into these four sessions, but there's also time for q and a and the next college admissions 101 is in February. It's Tuesdays in February at 8:00 PM Eastern time, and there's space available in the course if you're interested in joining. Check it out at www.thecollegespy.com/coursesandcamps.

The College Spy's Tip of the Day:

Start touring colleges early, as early as ninth or 10th grade. This is because your child will not feel the pressure to decide yes or no about a particular college and instead, feel free to learn about colleges, to learn about admissions, and to discover all options that are available to them.

Today's college spotlight is on DePauw University.

DePauw University is a small liberal arts college in Greencastle, Indiana. It is located about 40 miles from Indianapolis. It is known for its school of music, experiential learning programs, and commitment to students getting a "good" result upon graduation, such as a job fellowship or acceptance to graduate school.

With only 2,100 students, all of whom are required to live on campus all four years, students develop close relationships at DePauw. For a liberal arts college, many students are very career oriented and therefore take full advantage of the scholars and fellows programs offered. 25% of students participate in the Honors Scholars Program, which provides opportunities to work closely with professors on research or a thesis.

DePauw offers 45 majors, including interdisciplinary majors and the ability to design your own major. Interesting majors not always found at small liberal arts colleges include neuroscience,



finance, film and media arts, peace and conflict studies, and environmental biology. Famous alumni include Margaret Mead, Barbara King Solver, and Dan Quail.

I visited DePauw shortly before the pandemic and was especially impressed with its commitment to diversity, its friendly student and its focus on students finding work after graduation. I was told, if you don't have a job in six months, DePauw will give you a job or let you come back for a semester for free.

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